

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, May 17. 1711.

IN Obedience to the Importunity of the Town, I am brought on from one Step to another, to speak again of the *Affair of the 12 Proposals of British Visions*, which I mention'd some Time ago. — The Variety of People's Thoughts on that Subject is great; some think I have treated it with too much Levity, some with too much Gravity; some think I have put too much weight on it, some too little; some think I should have put no weight at all upon it, and say, I have put the Reputation of my Judgment to the Stake for it; some, that it deserves great and awful Thoughts — And these Contradicting Opinions, I

am not to expect to reconcile, they are all at Liberty to say and think as they please.

However, to set all to Rights in the Case, as near as I can, I shall first set my self to Rights in the Judgments of those, who being seriously inclin'd, expect it from me; and to this End, I shall give my own Thoughts on the Thing in General, and this may not only justify the Notice I have taken of the Book in particular, but tend to set some right in the Judgments they ought to make of such Things for the future — This I do, that I neither may be thought myself (or Encourage any other) either to Ridicule any forerunning Notices of God's Judg-
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judgments in the World, or put too great a Weight on the Produce of disemper'd Heads, or encourage Enthusiastick Boldnesses in this Uninspir'd, but pretending Age.

To do this seriously, I shall say but little to the Book itself——I cannot say I am pleas'd, that I have said so much, not that I have given just Ground for it, *but because I see some People making an ill use of it.*

The considering Reader of the Book, may evidently see there are two Strains in it——*One* the Predicator, who ventures to say Things of great Consequence——*The other* the Writer or Methodizer, for Publication, which sees, in a Preface particularly, to cover or colour the Substance, with an Air of Banter, Ridicule, and I know not what——Borrows a Name formerly jested with in the World; pretends to the great Age of a Person who is really no Body; talks of a second Sight, and much such kind of Stuff, perfectly wild and wide from the main Design.

This was certainly done from some of these Views; 1. A diffidence perhaps of the Things spoken of——Nor has it been altogether unusual, that Men may have been press'd to say what they durst not own they had a full Revelation of; or 2. To cover the serious part a little from the Eye of every Reader, that it might not have so solemn an Aspect till it went a greater length; or 3. To suit the Thing to the loose Humour of the Age, who sometimes must have a light loose Way taken with them, to introduce more serious Things to their Reading——Or 4. Merely to make the Book vulgar, and make the Publication of it easier to the Booksellers, or some such mean Views, which I cannot account for.

When I first look'd on this Book with any Attention, indeed I could easily throw by all the Froth and Levity, as above, and I own, I read some other Part of it with some seriousness——Whether I am censur'd or approv'd in it, is not much Material to the Case in Hand.

But I now come to give my Thoughts in the general, upon the Matter of the Thing

itself, call'd Humane Prediction, laying the Book and its Author, wholly by, as if no such Thing had ever been——I am none of those that are apt, by poring on Futurities, to fill my Head with Whymfical Notions, that Dream of Inspirations, and fancy themselves on the other side of Time; that call strong Imagination Revelation, and every Wind of the Brain an impulse of the Spirit; and this I meant, when I said formerly that *I am no Enthusiastick*, knowing at the same Time, that the true and Original Meaning of the Word *Enthusiasm*, was *Divine Inspiration*; and that, as a Letter I have by me from an Ingenious Stranger hints very well, that the Learned *Spencer* speaks, and yet not Prophane, of the Enthusiasms of Jesus Christ——But as I am speaking in Modern Phrase, I may be allow'd to use Words in the common Acceptation——And indeed every Author ought always to be understood so, unless he explain himself otherwise; *but thereby the Way.*

But now as, *I say*, on the one Hand, that I am no Enthusiastick in the Sense above, so I am not of the Opinion, that all Premonitions of Things to come, are to be slighted and rejected; I am no Pretender to Prophecy, nor Listener to every one that does so, yet I cannot believe that all Prediction is entirely to be Condemn'd——I am no Dreamer of Dreams, and yet I dare not say that all Dreams are to be entirely disregarded, or absolutely conclude, that no Man is now warned of God in a Dream, as has been formerly; and I humbly pray all serious People that call themselves Christians, and that have Charity to judge Impartially, and Judgment to distinguish between Things idly Suggested, and Things serious, Debated——to hear me with Calmness.

I firmly believe, and have had such convincing Testimonies of it, that I must be a confirm'd Atheist if I did not——A Converse of Spirits, I mean between those unembodied, and those call'd Soul, or incas'd in Flesh——Whether the first Ad in their Pre-existent State, or otherwise, I think (and am thankful for it) is as needless, as it is impossible to know; but that such a Converse

veste of Spirits is in Nature, I say, I am fully satisfy'd; from whence else, come all those private Notices, strong Impulses, pressings of Spirit, involuntary Joy, Sadness, and foreboding Apprehensions, and the like, OF, and ABOUT Things immediately and really attending us, and this in the most Momentous Articles of our Lives

— That there are such Things, I think I need not go about to prove; I never yet found the Man or Woman of any common Thought, but would witness to them— And I believe they are, next to the Scripture, some of the best and most undeniable Evidences of a *Future Existence*. It would be endless to fill this Paper with the Testimonies Learned and Pious Men of all Ages, have given to this; I could add to them a Volume of my own Experiences, some of them so strange, as would shock your belief; tho' I could produce such Proofs as would Convince any Man— I have had, perhaps, a greater variety of Changes, Accidents, and Disasters in my short and unhappy Life, than any Man, at least than most Men alive; yet I had never any considerable Mischief or Disaster attending me, but sleeping or waking I have had Notice of it before-hand, and had I listened to these Notices, I believe might have shunn'd the Evil— *Let no Man think this a Jest*— I seriously acknowledge, and I do believe, my neglects of these Notices have been my great Injury, and since I have ceased to neglect them, I have been guided to avoid even Snare laid for my Life, by no other Knowledge of them, than by such Notices and Warnings— And more than that, have been guided by them to discover even the Fact and the Persons.

I acknowledge, that the very Time, Persons, Circumstances, &c. of such Things, have been in this manner discover'd to me— I have living Witnesses to produce, to whom I have told the Particulars in the very Moment, and who have been so affected with them, as that they have press'd me to avoid the Danger, to retire, to keep myself up, and the like— Whose Advice, if I had not as well as the Notice aforesaid, entirely neglected, I believe, as I said a-

bove; I had been safe; which omitting and slighting, I went on, and have fallen into the Pit, exactly as describ'd to me— And to any one that thinks it useful, I shall descend to Particulars, which I avoid here only, as being a private Case, I think it not so Material.

What profitable Inferences may be drawn from every Man's Experiences in these Things, I leave out here, as having not Room for them— *Such I mean*, as may confirm the Existence State of the Invisible World; the certainty of Futurity, and above all, the Government of Providence, the Prescience, Omniscience, and Goodness, as well as Being of a God, and the like; These are Subjects too great for this Paper, but those that can improve the Hint, will, I hope, accept of it.

But I bring them down to my present Case, thus— If such NOTICES, &c. by whatsoever Hand, or to whatsoever purpose are given us, in our personal, private, and particular Cases, as I believe no Body will deny— Why may not the same Providence and Power permit the like Notices, call them what you will, or be they given by whatsoever Hand, to be given to some Persons in Matters Publick and National,

History is full of these, and were I not at the Writing of this, absent from Books, (being now Travelling, and at an Inn on the Road) I could bring a Numerous Roll of Quotations— But by my Memory, I may refer you to some— First, the famous Mr. Wishart, the first glorious Martyr for the Reformation in Scotland, burnt in the Square of the Palace or Castle, at St. Andrews; the Arch-Bishop coming out into his Balcony, to feed his Eyes with the Sight of his Torments, and Insulting him at the Time of his Death— When turning to the Bishop he told him from the Stake, That within a certain Time he should be Murder'd in the same Place, and his Naked Body be cast over that very Balcony, in which he then stood, into the Pavement, which actually and Literally came to pass as he had foretold— This I refer for, to the History of that Time.

Mr

Mr. *Bradford*, Martyr in *Queen Mary's* Time, had Notice of the Resolutions taken for his Burning, the Night before, and to the very Particulars of buying the Chain he was to be Bound with, as may be seen in Mr. *Fox*.

Another of the Martyrs we read of, whose Name I forget, who on the Rack, was made entirely senseless of any Pain, and dreamt, if it be reasonable to call it a Dream, that a Man in white with a Linnen Cloth stood by him, wiping the Sweat off from his Face.

Mr. *John Knox*, Mr. *Calvin*, Mr. *Luther*, and the famous *Brethman*, had all of them Eminent Passages of this kind; and yet we do not call any of them Prophets or Enthusiasts.

I might mention here, the Notices given by such Hints to many People; of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, mention'd by *Josephus*: The like of the Fire of *London* particularly foretold by Mr. *Wibers*, then a Prisoner in the Tower, six or ten Year before it happened, and many other.

I might descend to Dreams. But I am very wary and cautious of this, because of the odder Extreme, into which many, even good People are apt to run. We have in the Scripture several Instances of Men being warn'd of God in a Dream. I say no more to it than this. We are not told that God has been pleas'd to cease giving any Warnings to Men in their Dreams; nor is that Scripture taken by Expulsion, in any Sense but justifiable. Such a Notion as this, *Job 33. 14, 15, 16, 17.*

In a Dream, in a Vision of the Night, when deep Sleep fallith upon Men, in slumbrings upon the Bed.

Then he openeth the Bars of Sleep, and sealeth their Instructions.

That he may withdraw Man from his purpose, and hide Pride from Man.

Mr. *Poel* in his Annotations, says, this is meant of the Warnings God is pleas'd to give Men, to keep them from Executing those Evil Works which possibly they purpos'd to do.

Job in another Case, Expresses his disturbances in his Dreams to be from God; *I fear'd lest I should be warn'd with Dreams; and terrifiest me with Visions.* *Job 7. 14.* *Joseph's* and *Nebuchadnezzar's* Dreams are without Objection in this Case. And *Daniel's* Words to the King of *Babylon* are remarkable — *Thy Thoughts, O King, came into thy Mind, upon thy Bed; and he that Revealeth Secrets, hath let them know unto thee what shall come to pass.* *Dan. 2. 29.* — Again, *Joseph* was warn'd of God in a Dream, and the Angel of the Lord appeared to *Joseph* in a Dream; *Pilate's* Wife suffer'd many Things in a Dream, because of the Sentence going to be pass'd on our Lord; I might look into Prophane History, to the Dream, for such I take it to be of *Brutus* at *Philippi*; the Dream of *Caesar's* Wife, and many others.

But I refrain this, purely on account of these Poor disorder'd People, who, running into the other Extreme, are always Dreaming and misinterpreting. — And even Dream that they are Dreaming, till they d d d their Heads, and the Heads of those about them, whose Errors, however I pity, yet I cannot from thence reject all the warnings God is pleas'd to give us in the Visions of the Night. — I wish heartily I knew how far I might go between the Extremes, and to set you a Rule to walk by; between over-much, and too little regarding of Dreams, then I should say much more than I dare do now, being afraid I should be accessary to any of the frequent Mistakes about this Matter.

I shall say something of Prediction, second Signs, and Revelation, in my next on this Subject.